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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, May 23, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHAT'S IN A FOOD NAME?" Facts from the Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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How many raisins, in a pound of raisin bread?

I don't suppose more than one listener in ten thousand knows the answer to that question. And the one listener in ten thousand who does know the answer has been connected with a commercial bakery, or else she has a certain leaflet published by the Federal Food and Drug Administration, entitled: "Definitions and Standards for Food Products."

But here's the answer to the question -- in one pound of raisin bread, there are not less than three ounces of raisins. Which is as it should be, for the sake of children -- and grown-ups too -- who buy raisin bread for the raisins.

Our Washington correspondent has considerable to say, in this Monday report, about the leaflet I've just mentioned. It contains hundreds of food definitions and standards of identity for food products -- standards adopted as a guide for officials who enforce the Pure Food law.

"Having a sweet tooth," says our correspondent, "I turned first to the definitions for SUGAR AND RELATED SUBSTANCES, on page 11. Now you may think that sugar is just sugar -- granulated or lump. But Government officials go much further than that, when they define sugar. They call it 'sucrose (saccharose) obtained chiefly from sugarcane and sugar beets. Granulated, loaf, cut, milled, and powdered sugars are different forms of sugar, containing at least 99.5 percent of sucrose.'

"Here also are definitions for molasses, cane sirup, sugar sirup, maple sugar, maple sirup . . . Let's stop here a minute, and consider maple sirup, since that's one of my favorites. . . 'MAPLE SIRUP is sirup made by the evaporation of maple sap, or by the solution of maple and sugar. It contains not more than 35 percent of water. The finished product weighs not less than 11 pounds to the gallon.' That's the legal definition for maple sirup, and if a manufacturer of this product should be so unkind to maple sirup lovers as to make a sirup containing more than 35 percent of water -- well, he'd be violating the law, and would have to suffer the penalty.

"Next we have definitions for honey -- for comb honey, extracted honey, and strained honey, and now we come to spices. Fifty-one spices are defined in this leaflet. No -- fifty spices, for the first definition is for spices in general. Spices, if you don't know, are 'aromatic vegetable substances used for the seasoning of food. They are true to name, and from them no portion of any volatile oil or other flavoring principle has been removed.'

"Since spices are true to name, all we need do is read the label on the spices we buy -- the label required by the Pure Food Law -- and we'll know just what we are buying, for the label must tell the truth. For example, if we are buying cayenne pepper, we are getting 'the dried ripe fruit of Capsicum frutescens L., C. baccatum L., or some other small-fruited species of Capsicum. . .'

"No more spice definitions today, for I see that every time the Government describes our common spices, such as cinnamon, cloves, mace, nutmeg, sage, and so on, it includes in the definition a long Latin word. Whatever the spice, it seems that the Romans had a word for it.

"Let's look at the FLAVORING EXTRACTS. Here's a long list -- twenty-four different products. One we all use is vanilla, which, according to the legal standard of identity, is 'the flavoring extract prepared from the vanilla bean, with or without one or more of the following: sugar, dextrose, glycerin. . .' Here's one I've always been curious about -- oil of lemon. Oil of lemon is 'the volatile oil expressed, without the aid of heat, from the fresh peel of the lemon, with or without previous separation of the pulp and peel.' Oil of orange, as you would expect, is made 'from the fresh peel of orange.'"

"If you remember your experiments in the chemistry laboratory, you will know what that means," says our Washington friend, "but after all, that's the job of the Federal Food and Drug Administration, to know all about these chemical processes, and to use them when necessary in identifying food products. Enough for us to know that the spices and condiments we buy are pure and wholesome, that the name on the label means just what it says -- that we can trust the label to tell the truth."

In conclusion, our correspondent says that she has mentioned only a few of the definitions and standards contained in the leaflet, and she suggests that all homemakers interested in the food control work of the Federal Food and Drug Administration write for a copy of the leaflet.

It defines meat and meat products, milk and milk products, butter and cheese; vegetable products, fruits and vegetables; sugars, honey, spices, and flavoring extracts; mayonnaise dressing, vegetable oils and fats; tea, coffee, and cacao products; beverages, vinegars, -- even baking powder and salt.

A copy of this leaflet is yours for the asking. Just write to the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C., for their publication on -- DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS FOR FOOD PRODUCTS.

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